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ABSTRACT

Schools of education should spend at least eighteen months in planning for a team visit by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (N.C.A.T.E.). During this time, a coordinator and a steering committee of five to seven faculty members direct the process of preparation. Subcommittees should assume the responsibility of preparing reports and necessary materials for each N.C.A.T.E. standard. For this effort, faculty in the teacher education unit and in the university as a whole should be involved as well as student representatives and appropriate members of the administration. The major task in preparing the sections of the institutional report that deal with the standards is to have firm evidence demonstrating compliance with each of the six standards. All preparations should be made in accordance with a timetable drawn up by the steering committee, including the use of support staff, the actual on-site arrangements, and the scheduling of the visiting team members' activities. (FG)

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IN PREPARATION FOR N.C.A.T.E.

A PRAGMATIC SUMMARY

OF PROCESS

BY

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Introduction

The special issue of The Kappan in October, 1980 arrived one month prior to the N.C.A.T.E. visit to North Texas State University. The Tom and Gubser articles provided food for thought and no little concern as the final plans for the on-site visit were being completed.

At the conclusion of the visit it was suggested that we should put into writing the details of how we had prepared for the visit in hopes that other institutions might benefit from our experiences.

The key to a good accreditation visit is the preparation which precedes the actual on-campus visitation. The minimum time which should be allowed for this preparation is eighteen months. The time will seem excessive to those who have not been engaged in the multitude of details that must precede the on-campus visit.

Designate a Coordinator and Committee Structure

The chief administrative officer of the unit responsible for Teacher Education should designate a member of the faculty as the one responsible for the coordination of the entire process of preparation. If there is an assistant or associate dean, this individual would be the logical one to carry out the task. In any event, it would be desirable to program the coordinator with time amounting to approximately one-quarter of the regular assignment for a period of two academic semesters.

There will be several occasions when the collection of data will require that some "clout" be available to the coordinator. Within two weeks of the designation and announcement of the person responsible, a steering committee should be chosen by the coordinator and named by the chief administrator. This committee should probably range from five to seven members. The current standards for the National Council for the Accredit-

ation of Teacher Education consists of six standards. It might be well to have one member of the Steering Committee responsible for each of the standards and then have the coordinator assume overall responsibility for the task. The coordinator should then assemble the committee and, by mutual agreement, the tasks should be subdivided. As indicated earlier one standard per committee member seems desirable. The Steering Committee members should individually list five to seven members of the faculty whom they would select for membership on the various subcommittees. In a session devoted to planning, the committee should utilize a "draft" to select the composition of the various subcommittees for the standards. Any member of the committee should feel free to comment and recommend for the other standards since the magnitude of the task will require considerable coordination and cooperation.

Begin Collecting Data

Once the Steering Committee and the subcommittees have been informed of their appointments, and have agreed to serve, each should be provided with a copy of the Standards under which the institution will be evaluated. These should have been purchased by the coordinator almost as soon as the designation has been made. Each subcommittee should proceed with the formulation of what data will be needed to write to the Standard. Each subcommittee chairman should bring these requests to the Steering Committee in order that all members will be aware of what is being requested for coordination into one document which can be sent to each faculty member to minimize the number of forms which each will be requested to complete. If an automated data-bank is available, much of the information can be obtained without requesting it from faculty.

Each subcommittee and also the Steering Committee should make provision for the inclusion of one student on the committee. It would be

desirable to delay the visit to insure that they are enrolled at the time of the visitation.

The Steering Committee should carefully select an advanced graduate student to become a member of that committee, and the student should receive an appointment as a half-time assistant for the nine to twelve months preceding the visit.

Initially there should be monthly meetings of the Steering Committee until the time when material is being written. During the month when the Institutional Report is being written, assembled, and printed, it would be desirable for a brief meeting to be held weekly.

Involve the Faculty

The subcommittees working with each Standard will need to involve the faculty both within the unit charged with the preparation of teachers and within the College or University as a whole. Of particular importance is the Teacher Advisory Council, the advisors in the academic disciplines, and the administrative heads of each of the departments. If prior planning has established Advisory Committees for the various program areas, these committees should also be apprised of which programs are to be evaluated and be involved in the preparation of the Institutional Report. The academic areas as well as the unit responsible for teacher certification should provide data on the utilization of the recommendations of the various national committees such as the National Council for the Teachers of English. Most national associations have expended an enormous amount of energy and considerable cost in the preparation of such recommendations and, while no institution will be expected to follow all such recommendations, any deviation should be deliberate and for specific reasons. This exercise will strengthen the faculty and may even change some preparation programs.

The data-gathering process may require as much as nine months for the collection of feedback from a large number of units and the faculty. The writing stage will also take time as it will have to be completed in addition to the regular duties of the majority of the faculty members.

Well before the report is written, the coordinator should make arrangements for the design of a cover for the Institutional Report. The structure of the Standards lend themselves to being reported in three volumes with Number I being devoted to the Basic Programs, Number II to Advanced Programs, and Number III to the Faculty. The Steering Committee should be involved in the selection of a distinctive design. This task, though simple, will be expensive and must be programmed into the cost. It would be well worth the cost to provide for a book binding rather than to use the more usual spiral binding. The cost will be somewhat greater, but it will result in a better appearance and greater facility of use. The plans will need to be made well in advance, and the covers can be printed and stored until the report is completed.

Stay in Communication with Headquarters and the Visiting Team

When the Steering Committee has been formed, the group should recommend to the administrator when the committee will be prepared for the visitation. This date will then be submitted to the national office and becomes the target date for the entire project. All dates should be determined in relation to this date. The report should be to the national office at least a month prior to the visit, and each member of the visiting team will also be sent a copy. In addition, it will be necessary to send seven copies to the national office. In the case of North Texas State University, the visiting team was fifteen. The Steering Committee and the various administrative officials will each need a copy. Fifty copies should suffice. Once

the initial report has been produced, it is relatively inexpensive to add copies, and it will be advantageous for each person to have a personal copy. It may not be feasible to prepare a complete set for each faculty member, but copies should be available and faculty members should be encouraged to read them.

Provide Necessary Resources

The Steering Committee will need secretarial assistance from the beginning of the project. If a secretary is available for the first few months, the load will not be heavy, but after the first six months it would be desirable to have a half-time secretary for the remaining twelve months of the project. Depending upon the current wage rate, this amount will vary from institution to institution. We utilized student help and were fortunate enough to be able to hire good personnel. We were not able to keep the same individual throughout the project, although this would be desirable.

The graduate assistant will be the one working most closely with the secretary so efforts should be made to establish good working relationships.

All material typed should be considered as a rough draft and be proofed by some members of the various committees. The material submitted by the subcommittees for the standards will be given to the coordinator and will be changed as needed to make it conform to the model being used and to establish some continuity of style.

Writing the Report

It would be desirable for the coordinator to produce the section of the I-R which covers the Quantitative Data Sheet, the programs to be evaluated, and the Introduction. This will be no small task, but in most institutions a number of earlier reports will have been written and data from them can be utilized. If the institution is fortunate enough to have an Office of

Institutional Planning and Analysis, some representative from that office would be valuable on the committee. The Introduction should paint a picture for the visiting team of the institution through the years. If a history has been written, it will provide an adequate secondary source which will save a considerable amount of time. Such things as the composition of the student body, the make-up of the faculty, the institutions which have awarded faculty degrees, faculty experience in public education, and participation in school and community activities will be important.

Set Deadlines

It will be the responsibility of the Steering Committee to make certain that each subcommittee meets the deadlines which have been established. The copy center or the printer should be alerted well in advance that the material will be available by a specified date and care should be taken to meet that goal. It is easy to slip a day or two at various checkpoints along the way and then to miss the target date by several days. This will throw undue pressure on the reproduction task and could result in an inferior product. If the printing shop has the equipment to do the binding, that facility should also be alerted as to the date. We found that we could have all of the dividers and the labels for the appendix printed well in advance. We knew what we wanted and these were available when we started to assemble the final copies.

Prepare for the Visiting Team

As soon as the I-R was in the mail, the Steering Committee met to draw up plans for the on-campus visit. We decided that one member would be in charge of transportation, another would handle publicity, a third would arrange for the dinner meeting the first night and for the subsequent lunches on campus. A fourth member would be in charge of arrangements for snacks, coffee, and the work facilities.

The coordinator of the Steering Committee made arrangements for the pre-visit by the chairman of the Visiting Team. This visit was set for three weeks prior to the on-site visit. At this meeting the chairman and the coordinator met for several hours in laying plans and then met with all members of the Steering Committee for lunch on campus. This meeting allowed for questions and aided in establishing rapport between the Team chairman and the members of the Steering Committee. Prior to the chairman's arrival on campus, the coordinator for the Steering Committee had prepared a list of personnel to be interviewed along with a suggested schedule. We had available two interview rooms which would accommodate groups of up to 15 people. For individual interviews we arranged for the Visiting Team members to see these personnel in their offices. When the chairman arrived, he had already been in contact with the team members and some specific requests had been made. These were added to the list derived locally and fitted into the schedule.

Greet the Visiting Team

After the schedule had been agreed upon, the Steering Committee members accepted responsibility to notify selected individuals and groups of the time, place and who would be interviewed. In addition, we collectively arrived at a list of questions which we felt would be asked of each individual. These questions were duplicated and distributed to all those who were listed for interviews. This allowed each person to see what questions others might be asked as well as those that she or he should be prepared to handle. We had considerable feedback from those interviewed that these questions were helpful even though we supplied a number more than most were asked. There were obviously other questions asked which we had not listed.

Care had been taken to provide a good atmosphere. It is suggested that the Team be provided the best facilities available. Members are not

paid, and have to bear their own expenses until reimbursed. We arranged for the motel to charge the University and left instructions that normal items of expense could be charged to the motel room. We had made arrangements with the local Chamber of Commerce to have a packet of material about Denton in the motel rooms for the members upon their arrival. In addition, we had a letter from the member of the committee in charge of arrangements telling them where calls would be received in the event that there were questions.

For the dinner meeting we had decided to keep it simple. A good steak dinner, some music, introduction of the University personnel, introduction of the Team members and a 14 minute audio-slide presentation of the College of Education. Adjournment about 8:30 p.m. allowed the Team time to meet in the workroom provided to plan for the next two days.

Work with the Visiting Team

Efforts had been made to anticipate everything and, for the most part, we were successful. One or two members of the Team requested that appointments be rescheduled and these requests were complied with even though it was difficult and perhaps not in time to avoid considerable inconvenience.

If the University has an off-campus program or utilizes teacher centers and student teaching locations off the campus, it will be necessary to provide for at least one member of the Team to visit these locations. Since our off-campus program is in the evening, we arranged for two members of the Visiting Team to accompany a faculty member to class at one of the locations. Other Team members visited the elementary schools and junior high schools in the immediate vicinity.

In order to conserve time of the Visiting Team, we had pulled at random 30 degree plans at the three levels in a number of majors. Matching transcripts were obtained and filed with the degree plans as an Exhibit.

The closing session with the Visiting Team was the exit interview at 2:00 p.m. on the last day. The interview was conducted almost entirely by the chairman. The vice president and the dean were given the opportunity to ask questions or to challenge any of the statements.

The Team members left immediately from the campus and were transported to the airport for their flights.

Complete the Task

The Steering Committee met that night to compose a report to the faculty and had ready a brief questionnaire for distribution to the faculty. This dealt with whether each had been interviewed and some assessment of the visit as perceived by the faculty member. The committee also decided who would accept the responsibility for composing a "thank you" letter to the personnel who had assisted with the visit.

The Standards

A brief comment on each of the Standards seems in order,

Standard 1. This standard, dealing with governance, has been one that is particularly difficult for institutions. The task is simply one of explaining to the Visiting Team the provisions for faculty participation at the appropriate level. Documents to demonstrate that the participation exists in fact and not just on paper will be needed. Minutes of administrative units, committees, faculty senate, etc., will be useful in demonstrating that the faculty is heard in policy matters. Care will need to be exercised that the committee presents an accurate picture, for any visiting team can easily discover any attempt to hide or to camouflage.

Standard 2. This standard is concerned with the Curricula for Basic Programs. One of the key concerns in this standard is the provision for multicultural education. Evidence of faculty development, integration into existing courses, units or modules utilized, films available, faculty experiences

which will enhance student understandings, etc., should be made a part of the I-R. The key is probably documentation of a plan and evidence of implementation.

Each of the substandards should be dealt with in turn. Reference can be made to specific pages in the catalog or to documents in the Exhibit file.

Standard 3. This standard deals with faculty. The faculty has been assembled over the years, and efforts should have been made to provide a faculty with a wide variety of experiences and varying expertise. N.C.A.T.E. will be particularly concerned with the public school experience of the faculty. If there are no evidences of continuing involvement with the public school sector, this would need to be remedied prior to the visit. Provide the committee with all data such as faculty loads by semesters for at least three terms. Show how credit is given for things other than teaching. The actual faculty load documents should be filed in a place readily accessible to the Visiting Team. The N.C.A.T.E. materials contain suggestions regarding the form of vita.

As each subcommittee starts the writing process, it should be apprised that not everything needs to be included in the I-R. Set up a locked file where source documents can be retained for the inspection of the Visiting Team. The I-R can then make reference to the documents as an Exhibit. We found that we had a four-drawer file filled with source materials prior to the visit.

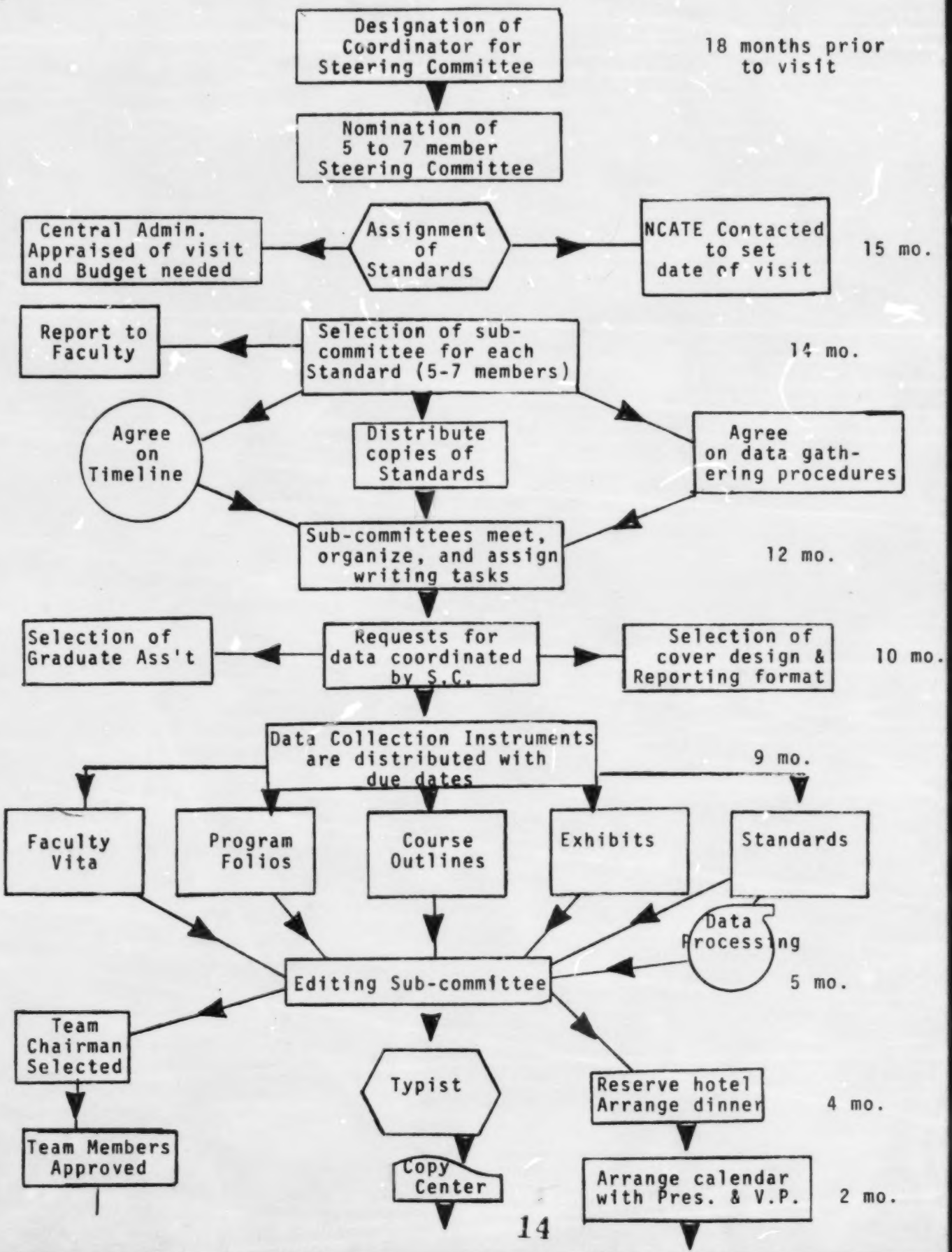
Standard 4. This standard calls for data on the students. Evidence should be presented for each substandard and quantified data will be essential. With the present trend toward entrance and exit standards one might anticipate more questions in this realm. Evidence to refute "grade inflation" would be helpful.

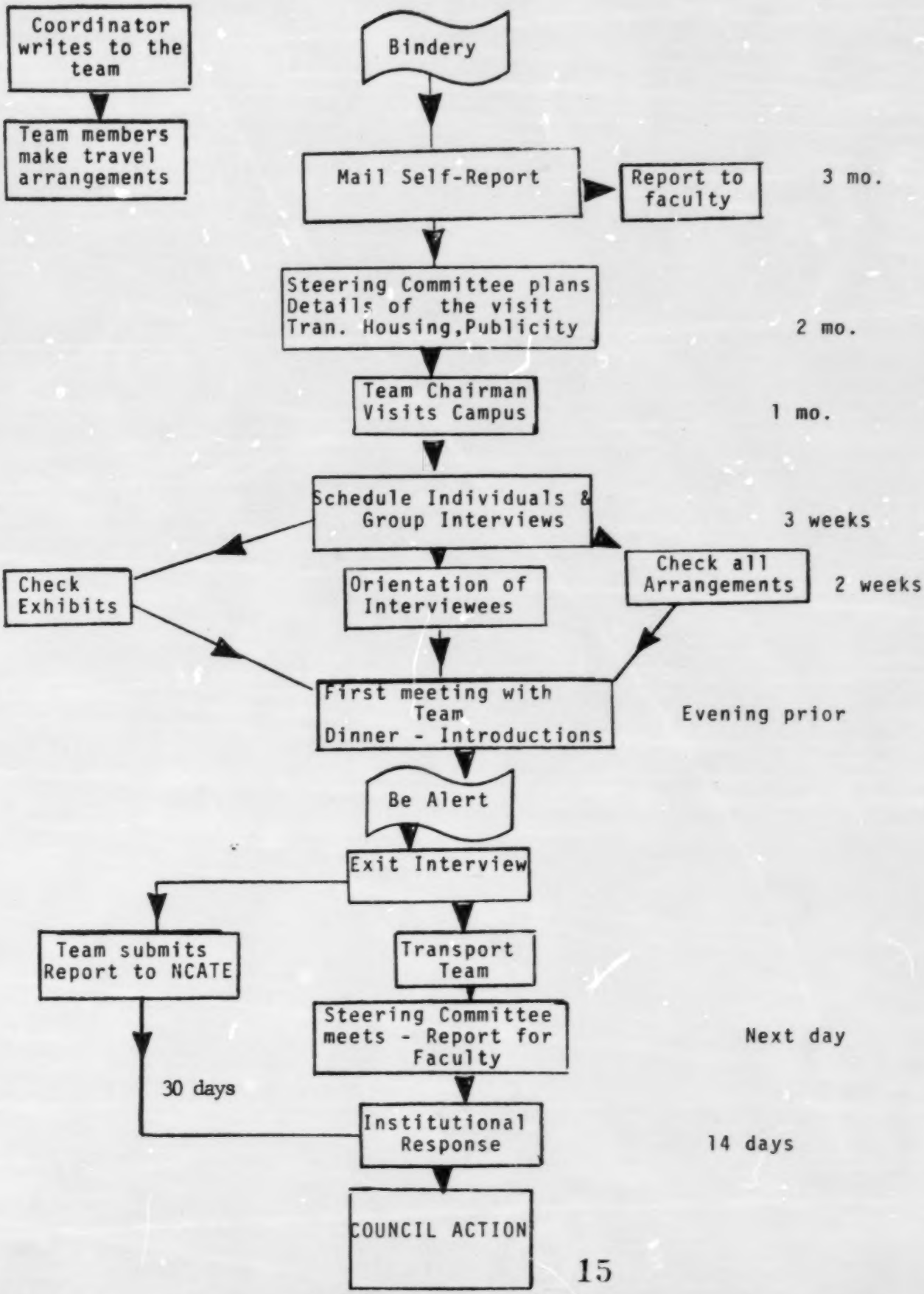
Standard 5. This standard deals with resources such as the Library, Media Center, Computer Center, faculty offices, etc. Special efforts will need to be made to describe the holdings in the Library and the Media Center. Evidence of use will be needed.

Standard 6. This standard is concerned with Evaluation and long range planning. The current necessity is to demonstrate that graduates have been involved in follow-up studies and that this feedback has been utilized in program modification. Stress the systematic nature of the process. This task must be ongoing and probably two or three years will be needed to actually demonstrate that change has resulted.

Conclusion

The visit was accepted as a learning experience by the members of the Steering Committee, and we think that the results will be beneficial to our College of Education. The Team assured us that there would be no surprises in the team report. It was essentially as presented to us in the exit interview. The Council met in March and all programs were approved. Much of the credit goes to an excellent faculty, a good visiting team and to careful planning.


Designation of Coordinator for Steering Committee
18 months prior to visit
Nomination of 5 to 7 member Steering Committee
Central Admin. Appraised of visit and Budget needed
Assignment of Standards
NCATE Contacted to set date of visit
15 mo.
Report to Faculty
Selection of sub-committee for each Standard (5-7 members)
14 mo.
Agree on Timeline
Distribute copies of Standards
Agree on data gathering procedures
Sub-committees meet, organize, and assign writing tasks
12 mo.
Selection of Graduate Ass't
Requests for data coordinated by S.C.
Selection of cover design & Reporting format
10 mo.
Data Collection Instruments are distributed with due dates
9 mo.
Faculty Vita
Program Folios
Course Outlines
Exhibits
Standards
Data Processing
Editing Sub-committee
5 mo.
Team Chairman Selected
Typist
Reserve hotel Arrange dinner
4 mo.
Team Members Approved
Copy Center
Arrange calendar with Pres. & V.P.
2 mo.


Coordinator writes to the team
Team members make travel arrangements
Bindery
Mail Self-Report
Report to faculty
3 mo.
Steering Committee plans Details of the visit Tran. Housing, Publicity
2 mo.
Team Chairman Visits Campus
1 mo.
Schedule Individuals & Group Interviews
3 weeks
Check Exhibits
Orientation of Interviewees
Check all Arrangements
2 weeks
First meeting with Team Dinner - Introductions
Evening prior
Be Alert
Exit Interview
Team submits Report to NCATE
Transport Team
Steering Committee meets - Report for Faculty
Next day
30 days
Institutional Response
14 days
COUNCIL ACTION